

SHARP
COLLECTION

S. Cochrane

A

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED IN BOSTON,

MAY 30, 1804,

BEFORE THE

Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society.

BEING THEIR SECOND ANNIVERSARY.

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Boston, June 1, 1804.

*At a Meeting of the Standing Committee of the MASSACHUSETTS
BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY,*

VOTED,

THAT the thanks of the Society be presented to the
Rev. Dr. BALDWIN, for his Sermon delivered before them on
their second Anniversary ; and request a copy for the press.

SAMUEL STILLMAN, *Chairman.*

A
S E R M O N.

ACTS xvi. 9.

— “COME OVER INTO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.”

FOUR thousand years had elapsed before the Christian era, without any real improvement in the moral state of the world. Darkness still covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. Idolatry, superstition, and ignorance reigned with unlimited sway. The knowledge of the true God was lost from a great part of the world, and the grossest impiety and wickedness prevailed. Vice did not exist by mere connivance, but was supported by public authority, and sanctioned by the impious rites of religion.

Should these remarks appear severe, a little attention to the actual state of mankind at this period, will convince us that they are just. The last of the four great empires mentioned in the prophecy of Daniel, was now in the full tide of prosperity. The Roman arms had been victorious in all quarters of the globe. And so universal was the dominion of Augustus Cæsar, that soon after the birth of Christ he sent out a decree, that all the world should be taxed.

To know what the religion of the Romans was, we need not labour through the writings of *Tacitus*:

Six lines in the first chapter of the epistle addressed to them by Saint Paul, will furnish the desired information. "Professing themselves to be wise, (said the Apostle) they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man ; and to birds ; and to four-footed beasts ; and creeping things." You cannot, my brethren, read the subsequent part of this account without blushing for the depravity of our species.

The religion of the Greeks was no better. This we may gather from the writings of the same Apostle ; particularly from his account of his visit at Athens. Here, besides altars erected to every God, which either they or their fathers had known, there was one standing as a monument of their superstition and ignorance, inscribed "*to the unknown God.*" Their morality, as might be supposed, was as imperfect, as their notions of a Deity were absurd. Wherever polytheism was professed, idolatry was practised. Without multiplying proofs, these may be considered as a general specimen of Gentile religion.

The Jews, it will be confessed, enjoyed superior advantages. To them were committed the lively Oracles of God. But they had greatly obscured the glory of their holy religion by the impure mixture of their own traditions. They retained the external form, but had lost in a great degree its spirituality. The state of religion among them is very accurately described by the writer above quoted. "Behold, (said Paul) thou art called a Jew, and reatest in the law, and makest thy boast of

God, and knowest his will, and approveſt the things that are more excellent, being inſtructed out of the law.” But what improvement did they make of theſe advantages ? The Apoſtle aſks, “ thou that makeſt thy boaſt of the law, through breaking the law diſhonoureſt thou God ? for the name of God is blaſphemed among the Gentiles through you.”* Thus we ſee Jews and Gentiles nearly on a level as to the practice of religion.

The times which immediately preceded the dawn of goſpel day, were emphatically ſtyled by the Apoſtle “ *times of ignorance.*” But while the nations were thus fitting in darkneſs and the region of the ſhadow of death, the *day-star* aroſe, as the happy precursor of the Sun of Righteouſneſs. John the Baſtiſt appeared, to give knowledge of ſalvation by the remiſſion of ſins. He announced the near approach of his divine Maſter ; and declared that he was ſent to prepare his way. “ Every mountain and hill, (ſaid he) muſt be made low, and every valley exalted. The crooked places muſt be made ſtraight, and the rough places plain ; for the glory of the Lord ſhall ſoon appear.” At length the wondrous Child was born. Angels announced the joyful advent to the eaſtern Shepherds. “ Behold, (ſaid they) we bring you glad tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people.” While a ſlumbering world lay reſoſed in midnight ſilence, the muſic of heaven ſwelled upon their delighted ears, and echoed along the ſpacious plains of Bethlehem. What ſtrains immortal burſt from angelic tongues ! “ Glory to God in the higheſt ! and on earth peace ! good will towards men.”

* Rom. ii. 17, 18, 23, 24.

For wise and holy purposes, the gospel for a time was published to the Jews only. And the disciples were directed first to preach to none but the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But our blessed Lord, before his ascension, enlarged their commission, and bid them go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Upon the authority of this commission, the Apostles itinerated throughout Judea, Samaria, and Syria. While the greater part of them were engaged in Palestine, Paul and his companions were sent on a mission into Asia Minor. Taking passage at Selucia, they came to Salamis in the island of Cyprus. Here they preached the word of God in all the synagogues of the Jews. From Salamis, they went through the isle to Paphos, where Paul was made happily instrumental of the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the deputy of the country. From the last mentioned place they took passage for Perga in Pamphilia. Having reached the place of their destination, they went on publishing the gospel throughout the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. They intended next to have visited Bithynia, but the Spirit led them another way. Therefore passing Myssia, they came down to Troas, which lay upon the eastern border of the Ægean sea. While Paul and his company tarried here, "a vision appeared to him in the night: there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, *"Come over into Macedonia and help us."*

Important request! Was it possible to turn a deaf ear to such a pressing invitation? Could this holy Apostle or his companions refuse to go? Surely

they could not. And is not the voice of thousands of our fellow creatures scattered in the wilderness crying to us, "Come over and help us?" Can any present refuse their assistance, when the object is to promote the salvation of immortal souls? If you cannot go in person, will you not contribute something to assist those who can? A single doubt shall not be entertained on the subject. No, I am persuaded you already feel the Missionary spirit; and wait only to have your views directed to proper objects, and your assistance will be liberally granted.

From the subject, thus placed before us, we are led to make the following inquiries.

I. What were the peculiar circumstances of this people, which called for help from the ministers of Christ?

II. Are there any of our fellow beings at the present day, whose circumstances urge a similar claim upon us?

III. What measures ought we to pursue in order to afford them the help which they need?

We proceed then to inquire, what were the peculiar circumstances of the people of Macedonia, which called for Paul and his companions to come and help them. We answer,

1st. They were immersed in the grossest ignorance, and lived without God and without hope in the world. The existence of a Supreme Being has frequently been acknowledged by idolaters. But after all it must be confessed, that *the world by wisdom knew not God*. If they acknowledged that there was a God, yet their conceptions of him were utterly unworthy

the Supreme Ruler of the universe. They generally supposed him so far removed from his creatures, as to take no concern in the affairs of men ; but that he had committed the management of every thing here, to an endless number of subordinate deities. Many of these were, by their own confession, guilty of crimes which would have disgraced human nature in its most depraved condition. To these gods, they offered their sacrifices, and poured their libations upon their altars. How wretched must the state of such a people be, who had lost the knowledge of the true God ! Their affecting condition cried aloud, " Come over and help us."

2. They were without the appointed means of salvation.

They undoubtedly felt, as mankind in every age have done, a consciousness of guilt, but knew not the way of peace and pardon. The glad sound of the gospel had never yet reached their ears. They knew not how God could be just, and justify the ungodly.

To be sensible of our situation as sinners ; to be conscious of our future accountability at a just tribunal ; to believe the doctrine of immortality ; and yet remain ignorant of the only way in which pardon can be conferred upon the penitent, must be distressing in the extreme.

This people, though sitting in the shades of heathenish darkness, might have heard by the Jews who were dispersed among them of the expected Messiah. Yea, it is possible they might have heard that he had actually come. For his fame (we are told) went abroad into all lands. But if the name

of Jesus had ever reached their ears, it is probable they had no correct notions, either of his character or offices. There were many whose prejudices would represent his religion as imposture, and that himself had been arrested in Judea, and crucified as a malefactor. But should it even be supposed that their minds were favourably disposed, and that they were sincerely desirous to know the truth, yet still they had none to instruct them in the way which leads to peace.

3. They needed some persons properly qualified to teach them the way of salvation by the cross of Christ.

We are told by an apostle, that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God: But how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they are sent?" The preaching of the gospel is not only calculated to comfort such as mourn under a sense of sin, but to awaken the thoughtless and unconcerned. There is in mankind a strange indisposition to the concerns of the soul. Religion is a business which they wish to put off till a more convenient season. The world calls to-day, therefore heaven is desired to call to-morrow. To awaken men from this awful stupor into which sin has plunged them, the ministers of Christ are sent like sons of thunder, to alarm them of their danger, and instruct them how they may escape the wrath to come.

With a view to the restoration of lost sinners, God has been graciously pleased to appoint the ministry of reconciliation. And although the most

faithful and zealous preachers of the gospel can do nothing of themselves towards the conversion of their fellow-men; yet Christ has promised, and does actually send the Holy Spirit to succeed, and render effectual their feeble efforts. Armed with this divine influence, the weapons of their warfare become mighty through God to the pulling down the strong holds of sin.

It would be presumption in us, to attempt to limit the Holy One of Israel. We know that God can work by means or without them. He can communicate his grace to the hearts of sinners without their hearing the gospel dispensed; yet it hath pleased him, "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

It is impossible, perhaps, for us fully to appreciate the privileges we enjoy; nor can we realize the pitiable condition of those who are destitute of religious instruction. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." "They are destroyed for the lack of knowledge." It is but too evident, that where the gospel is statedly preached, many set lightly by and despise it. But others, less privileged, when they have opportunity to see and hear a faithful minister, exclaim with rapture, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that sayeth unto Zion, Behold thy God!"

4. This people were also strangers to all the benefits derived from communion in Christian ordinances.

God hath appointed these as means of promoting our communion with him, and fellowship one with

another. Where the ordinances of the gospel are administered according to divine appointment, they form a visible distinction between the church and the world. They were designed exclusively for the friends of Christ. None else can receive them with pleasure, or saving advantage. Next to the gospel itself, the believer prizes its precious institutions. How does his soul languish after them, if by any means he is deprived of their enjoyment! Like David, he pants with immortal desire after God, and longs to meet him in his temple, in ways of his own appointment. Could any worldly considerations induce you, my brethren, to resign such privileges as these? Could you be persuaded to barter them for any thing earthly? Certainly you could not. Who then that knows the value of these precious ordinances, does not wish his fellow-men to participate in their blessings?

We add once more,

5. They had no well-grounded hope of future immortality.

From the darkness and confusion which rested upon their future prospects, they were driven to seek repose in the shades of eternal oblivion. Strangers to the heaven-inspiring hope of the gospel, they had nothing solid on which they could rest in the dying hour. If they doubted of future existence, then the wide gulph of annihilation yawned before them! If they believed the doctrine of immortality, what extreme anxiety must fill the mind at the moment of dissolution! See the poor soul on the verge of time, without chart! without compass! without any knowledge of its port of desti-

nation ! without a pilot ! just ready to launch into the wide ocean of eternity. Oh gloomy prospect ! Who that ever knew the soft emotions of pity could refuse to help such benighted beings ? Who that feels the zeal of an Apostle would not willingly go and preach the gospel to them ?

We pass to inquire,

II. Are there any of our fellow beings at the present day, whose circumstances urge a similar claim upon us ?

After the lapse of eighteen centuries, I wish it could be said in truth, that more than half of the inhabitants of the world were not still pagans. Do you ask where they are to be found ? The answer will be, in every quarter of the globe. In Asia, in Africa, in Europe, in America.

Are there not unnumbered millions inhabiting the eastern continent, whose ears were never yet saluted with the glad sound of salvation by the cross ! In vain does the troubled conscience seek relief by consulting their *Vedum* or *Spasters*. In vain do they implore the assistance of *Bramah* and *Foe* ! these are gods which cannot save. In vain do they repeat their ablutions in the Ganges ; these sacred waters (as they term them) cannot wash away the leprosy of sin. Its stains are of a moral nature, and lie chiefly upon the heart. Hence their fairest hopes have nothing to rest upon but delusion !

The wretched condition of the poor Hindoos has called up the feelings of our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic, who seemed to hear them cry, " Come over and help us." The attempt has been made and still continues, with an increasing

prospect of success. We will pray without ceasing for their prosperity.

The interior parts of Africa are enveloped in the same moral darkness. Pagan idolatry, with a mixture of Mahomedan imposture, spreads over these burning regions, from the tropic of Cancer, to the Cape of Good Hope. A number of Missionaries, however, are endeavouring to spread the light of the gospel among them. May the blessing of thousands ready to perish come upon them.

A cry for help has also been heard from afar, even from the islands of the sea. The South-sea islands are found to contain an immense population; millions of human beings, whose souls are as susceptible of the pains of guilt, or the joys of salvation, as ours. Though formed by the same divine skill, and governed by the same universal Providence, they remain ignorant of the first principles of religion. Their perishing condition has excited the compassion of some of the friends of Jesus in the British Isle, who have sent a number of Missionaries to teach them the knowledge of salvation by Christ. Our hearts exclaim, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, *let the multitude of the isles be glad.*"

Without exploring the gloomy wilds of Lapland, or the frozen regions bordering upon the pole, where man is still to be found in his savage state, and his mind bewildered in all the darkness of pagan superstition, let us direct our thoughts to those who inhabit our western forests. Here are multitudes of our red brethren, who live in the very neighbourhood of professing Christians, and yet after the lapse of almost two centuries are still Pa-

gans! Has our example been such as to convince them that our religion is superior to theirs? Or has it rather served to confirm them in their ignorance and unbelief? Have any suitable attempts been made, to enlighten and christianize them? Or have we beheld their savage ignorance with a cold unfeeling disdain? Surely an entire indifference to the eternal well-being of any of our fellow-creatures very little becomes the benevolent spirit of the gospel. While we blame our past neglect, we are happy to find that some of our fellow Christians are stirred up, to make new exertions for their conversion. May the blessing of Almighty God crown their labours with abundant success.

But an object, more immediately contemplated by this society, was to supply occasional preaching in the infant settlements in our own country. Here is ample room for missionary labour without going among the Aborigines.

What an immense extent opens from the St. Croix to the Mississippi! On the frontiers of most of this wide range, the inhabitants are too thinly settled to enjoy the usual privileges of Christian society. Years must pass away in many places, before they will be sufficiently numerous, to afford an expectation of having a stated ministry among them.

We are far from looking upon our brethren, who are scattered in the wilderness, either as pagans or idolaters. We rejoice to think there are many sincere Christians interspersed among them. And if so, how must their souls languish for the refreshing waters of the sanctuary! Will not their

thoughts run back to days past, when they went in company with their friends to the house of God ; when they sat under his shadow with delight, and his fruit was sweet to their taste ? May we not suppose them often pleading with God, that he would send some of his dear servants to *help them* ? To preach the unfearchable riches of Christ, and break to them the bread of life ? Perhaps others in the language of discouragement are ready to say, " Can God furnish a table in the wilderness ? " Yes, mourning Christian, he that led Joseph as a flock, will take care of his own, though scattered in a desert. He will yet open " rivers in high places," and cause the wilderness to blossom as the rose, and the solitary place to rejoice with singing.

In some instances which have already occurred to our knowledge, it has been found that children have been born, and grown almost to manhood, without ever having heard the gospel ; and some without having seen a Bible !* But should it be admitted that they enjoy the Bible, do they not, like the Ethiopian Eunuch, need *some man to guide them* ? In a word ; does not the situation of thousands in the wilderness cry, *Come over and help us* ?

The kind reception which our Missionaries have experienced, wherever they have travelled, is a strong plea in favour of further exertions. The people, to whom they have been sent, have *received them with all readiness of mind* ; and many with tears in their eyes have been constrained to say, " These are the servants of the most high God, who show unto us the way of salvation." Their joy on having

* See Mr. Cornell's Letter in 1st Number of our Magazine.

the gospel thus sent to them, has called forth undissimulated expressions of gratitude and praise to God, as well as sincere thanks to the Missionaries, and to the Society at whose expense they are sent.

Did the people appear indifferent and inattentive to the gospel, when sent among them, or should they go still farther, and oppose them that were sent, it would be discouraging; yet I am not certain it would even then be duty to relinquish the design. But when, instead of this, we reflect on the great distance which many travel, the many difficulties they cheerfully encounter in assembling to hear the gospel; and above all, the solemn and affecting attention with which the word is received, can we hesitate a moment whether there is not a Macedonian call to *help them*?

We proceed to inquire,

III. What measures ought we to pursue, in order to afford them the help which they need?

1. We presume it will not be doubted, but that we ought to send some of our brethren in the ministry to preach the gospel to them.

There are some who can go, and whose hearts incline them to undertake the service. But none in my opinion ought to be sent, but such as are possessed of the true apostolic missionary spirit; men whose hearts are in the work; who are willing to preach not only publicly, but from house to house; whose ardent love to Christ and to the souls of men, will carry them through the difficulties and fatigues attendant on services of this nature. To travel in the new settlements, a Missionary must be able and willing to *endure hardness as a*

good soldier of Jesus Christ. He will often have to encounter storms, cold and hunger. He must be willing to fare hard, sleep little, and labour incessantly. These are the men we ought to send. No others can consistently be employed; for it was never contemplated by this institution, to make provision for a list of invalid pensioners; but to employ men of evangelic sentiments and approved integrity; such as are willing to spend and be spent, for the good of souls.

2. If we send men on this laborious, self-denying service, they must be supported. We cannot expect them to go upon this warfare at their own charges. Nor can the people to whom they minister do much for them: for it is a primary object with this Society, to send the gospel to such as are unable to provide preaching for themselves.

To defray these expenses, therefore, *funds* must be raised. The method which we have thought proper to adopt for this purpose is an annual subscription by the members, and voluntary contributions from such as are well-wishers to the institution. And we feel bound this evening to acknowledge the goodness of God in hitherto succeeding our feeble attempts, far beyond our most raised expectations.

Though our institution is yet in its infancy, four Missionaries have been engaged in the service of the Society much of the last year. One has been employed on the frontiers of the state of New-York, and in the British province of Upper Canada. The other three have visited and preached in the new settlements in the District of Maine; and in the northwesterly parts of New-Hampshire,

and parts of Vermont contiguous. By accounts which have been transmitted to the Society, we have reason to believe, that their *labours have not been in vain in the Lord*. We have much to encourage us to perseverance. The missionary fields are whitening to the harvest, and the faithful labourers are yet but few. While we cease not to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth more labourers into his vineyard, let us faithfully employ all the means in our power to accelerate the same good work.

It gives us much pleasure to acknowledge before this respectable audience, the generous patronage afforded to this Society by Christians of different denominations, both by public and private donations. With a view to encourage the good work in which we are engaged, several persons unknown to us, and others whose names we are not at liberty to mention, have contributed to our funds with a liberality which ought not to be concealed. Besides the collection which was made at our last annual meeting, amounting to dolls. 147; a worthy friend in a neighbouring town has contributed at different times to the amount of dolls. 150. A donation of 40 dollars, in addition to his annual subscription, has also been received from a pious young gentleman in this town. From two female societies in this place, composed chiefly of young women, 132 dolls. 84 cts. have also been received. One of these societies is called the *Cent Society*; that sum being the weekly subscription of each member. A respectable gentleman belonging to the town of Milton, who happened not long since to hear one of our Missionaries deliver a discourse,

in which the destitute situation of those who inhabit the wilderness was described; his feelings became so interested that he resolved while hearing the sermon, that whatever money should be collected for him on that day he would appropriate to the use of the Society. On his return, he found that thirty dollars had been collected: the whole of which he sacredly devoted according to his previous determination.* Several other generous donations, though of less amount, have been received, chiefly from female friends. I must beg your indulgence while I mention one instance more. Its interesting nature will apologize for my being particular. A young lady of the town of Medfield lately addressed a letter to the Trustees of this Institution, in which, after acknowledging the goodness of God to her, especially in bringing her to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life, she adds, "having now a desire to live to the glory of God, and to do all the good I can on earth, I therefore take a pleasure in laying aside some of my small earnings to send to you, for the noble purpose of assisting in defraying the charges of sending some of our brethren as missionaries, to preach the gospel to poor sinners, who are perishing for lack of knowledge. I rejoice that my hands, as well as my heart, may do something to help build up the Redeemer's kingdom." The letter enclosed a bill of TEN DOLLARS! Whose heart does not warm at the recital of such godlike charity? Who does not wish the pleasure of imitating such an example?—Well,—“go thou and do likewise.”

* This article was omitted, through mistake, when this discourse was delivered.

Thus, my hearers, agreeably to what was proposed, I have endeavoured to explain the situation of the people of Macedonia, which called for help from the apostles. I have also given you a brief sketch of the state of our fellow-men at the present day, who are denied the blessings of the gospel. Permit me now to ask, Does not their destitute condition cry to you this evening, "Come over and help us?"

An attempt to adduce arguments in order to draw forth your charity, would be to insult your feelings; for I am persuaded you only wait for an opportunity to show your readiness to help in sending the gospel to your brethren scattered in the wilderness. You will be indulged on the present occasion the pleasure of expressing your benevolence, in a way which we hope will tend to the glory of God, and the happiness of your fellow-men. Could you entertain the pleasing thought, that what you contribute this evening may be a mean of sending the gospel to some perishing soul, who otherwise perhaps would never hear it, and who, under a divine influence, may be brought to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and so be eternally happy, you would forever bless God for affording you this opportunity. I will only add, for your encouragement, the gracious declaration of our Saviour; "In as much as you did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." That this approving language may be addressed to each of us, by our final Judge at the last great day, grant, O Father, for the Redeemer's sake,

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